2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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731 Whether there is food or famine, a bare sufficiency or a surplus for the
241 majority of people, depends on other things than human efficiency. It depends enormously on the weather. Drought (*waar*) in the early months of the rainy season brings hunger; an erratic distribution of rainfall causes a poor harvest; an unusually violent tornado (*sanziug*), crushing and uprooting the young millet, produces a shortage. Locusts (*tinta'aba*) descending suddenly, inexplicably, on the half-grown crops and devouring them, ruin the most efficient farmer's work. These are public calamities beyond human control, and they are an ever-present danger. During my first tour in Taleland a long gap in the normal sequence of the early rains threw everybody into a state of foreboding. Men went about restlessly, waiting anxiously for a sign of rain. During my second tour locusts destroyed the crops in one part of the country. The grief and chagrin of those whose crops had suffered showed that they felt they had suffered an irreparable loss.

164 Another possible natural disaster which would destroy physical well-
165 being and rend the social fabric is an epidemic of small-pox (*zinzaaŋ*) or of measles (*kasoo*).[1] Cases of *kasoo* occur every year and the mortality is high. I have heard of more than one family in which several children died of it in a week or two. Naturally the natives, who have no remedy for it, regard it with terror. The last small-pox epidemic (before 1937) occurred about a generation ago. The natives know that the white man's precautions will check any future epidemic, but they still dread the danger. For small-pox, when it comes, devastates social life. People stop visiting
[766 their kinsfolk and neighbours; stricken families are isolated by a wall of
758] thorn bushes; those who die of small-pox are not even given proper burial but are interred in the midden heap or thrown into the uncultivated bush. At such times small-pox must be referred to by a euphemism. It is 'the chief' (*na'ab*), and a death due to it is 'the chief has bestowed a boon (*na'ab maalya*)'.

731 These are the ever-possible public calamities which defeat human effort and skill. Private dangers also threaten the individual farmer. A snake might bite him as he stoops to hoe; blight might destroy his millet but leave his neighbour's farms unaffected; sickness might lay him low or deprive him of the help of wife or son.

788 It must not be thought that the Tale farmer goes about in a permanent
771 state of fear of these external dangers to his welfare and security. When
782 things are going well he does not give a thought to them. Living, as they do, at a subsistence level that gives them no regular surplus over what they require to satisfy their normal wants, the Tallensi take no long-term precautions, either individually or collectively, against the dangers of starvation or pestilence. They have neither the technical means nor the social institutions for such measures. But these threats do materialize often enough for them to serve as the realities towards which Tale acts of ritual self-protection, both individual and collective, are directed. Tallensi do not believe that these ritual acts will prevent natural disasters

[1] From the natives' description of the symptoms, I think the sickness they call *kasoo* is probably measles, but I am not certain and I have not been able to obtain medical corroboration.

4: Fortes and Fortes E-5 (1934-1936) 1936
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may do so for himself. She, again, may eat an animal he avoids, but would hardly find it feasible to cook it in her own kitchen.

The occasions for which special foods are customary are few. A woman in her first pregnancy must eat food ' which is good for her ', such as meat and highly seasoned soup and avoid unsuitable foods such as thinly mixed flour-water (*zɔmsaka*), left-over porridge, or too many sweet potatoes or frafra potatoes. Nor may she eat cold food or drink too much cold water. ' Sweet ' food (i.e. luxury foods such as sold in the market) is not encouraged, while honey is prohibited for magical reasons. A woman found eating the latter is severely reprimanded and a special rite has to be carried out on the birth of the child or it will have a blocked nose. During confinement a woman is given porridge with highly seasoned soups and a generous allowance of fish or meat to make her strong.

There is no specific food for sick people, except that fresh porridge and pungent soup are considered strengthening. The prognosis is very grave if a sick person refuses food. In the prostration of grief, too, people refuse food and their relatives try to tempt their palate with delicacies.

Old and toothless people in time of food shortage are given crushed ground-nuts (*sukpabugra*) to drink down with water.

We have attempted, in this paper, to give an outline of the domestic commissariat of the Tallensi. Our interest has been focussed on the principles according to which the domestic groupings of Tale society organize and sustain the social activities customary for the production of raw foodstuffs, their preservation, and their conversion into and consumption as edible food. We have observed how the ever-changing, developing structure of the joint family determines these activities; how Tale culture defines the values and norms by which these activities are regulated and directed; how these values and norms, on the one hand, and seasonal conditions, on the other, control the annual cycle of food production and consumption; and finally, how the convergent influence of family structure, cultural norms and values, and seasonal exigencies determine the crucial situation of the series, the translation of the product of natural resources and culturally organized labour into the edible food in the kitchen.